

## CIVIL AIR PATROL – ARUNDEL COMPOSITE SQUADRON

MER-MD-023 (<http://arundel.mdwg.cap.gov>)

**October 2004**

**SAFETY**

**HALLOWEEN SAFETY**

Halloween is the time when youngsters dress-up in scary costumes and go from door to door “trick-or-treating”. This annual celebration starts at sunset on the last day of October, and continues into the night. But what is actually celebrated on Halloween, and how did this custom originate?



### History of Halloween

Thousands of years ago, the Celtic people inhabited the area that is now England, Ireland, and Scotland. They celebrated their New Year on November 1<sup>st</sup>. The Celtic religious order known as the Druids held a great festival each year on the evening before their New Year. This festival was celebrated in honor of the god, Samhain, the Druid god of death, and the festival was known as All Hallowtide. The Druids believed in the supernatural, and tried to please the Lord of Death with offerings.

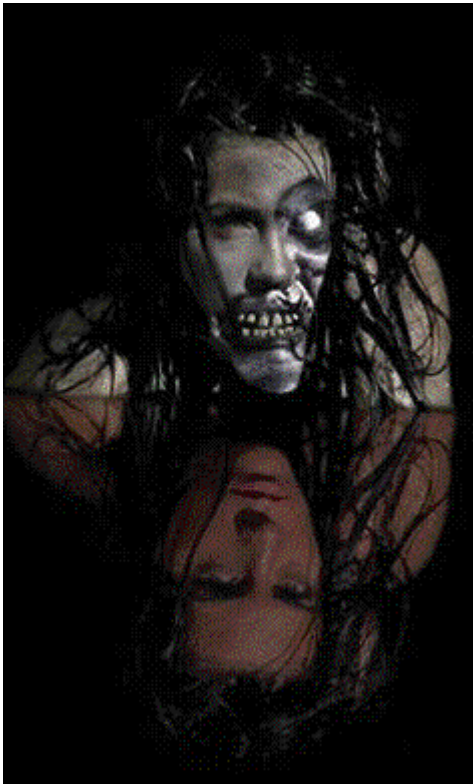
They also believed that on this day, the souls of those who had died during the previous year began their journey to another world. Druids believed that the souls of the dead returned to their former homes to be entertained by the living. Bonfires were built on top of hills so that they may find their way. Suitable food and shelter was provided for these spirits or else they would cast spells and cause havoc, steal infants, destroy crops, kill farm animals, or haunt the living. This is the action that “trick-or-treat” emulates today.



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Christian missionaries in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century sought to reform the pagan belief of the Celtic people. They strategically centered all of their holy days around the native holidays, and named November 1 the Feast of All Saints. This day honored all Christian saints, known or unknown, and was meant to replace the festival of Samhain. The day was similarly called All Hallows, where the word “hallow” means sanctified, or holy. The custom of Halloween was brought to America in the 1840’s by Irish immigrants fleeing their country’s potato famine.

Jack-O-Lanterns also entered America’s Halloween scene with the Irish in the 1840’s. As the tale is told, Jack was a blacksmith, who was also a notorious drunkard and trickster. He made a deal with the Devil. Jack traded his soul in return for mastery of his trade. Then a saint named Peter came to Jack and offered him three wishes, hoping that he would choose wisely and save his soul. But Jack used the three wishes to trick the devil. He tricked Satan into climbing a tree. He then carved an image of a cross in the tree’s trunk, thereby trapping the devil up on the tree. Jack then made a deal with the devil: If the devil would never tempt him again, then Jack promised to let him down from the tree.



According to the folk tale, when Jack died, he was denied entrance to Heaven because of his evil ways. He was also denied access to Hell because he had tricked the devil. Instead, the devil gave him a single ember to light his way through the frigid darkness. The ember was placed inside a hallowed-out turnip to keep it glowing longer. In Irish folklore, Jack became known as “Jack of

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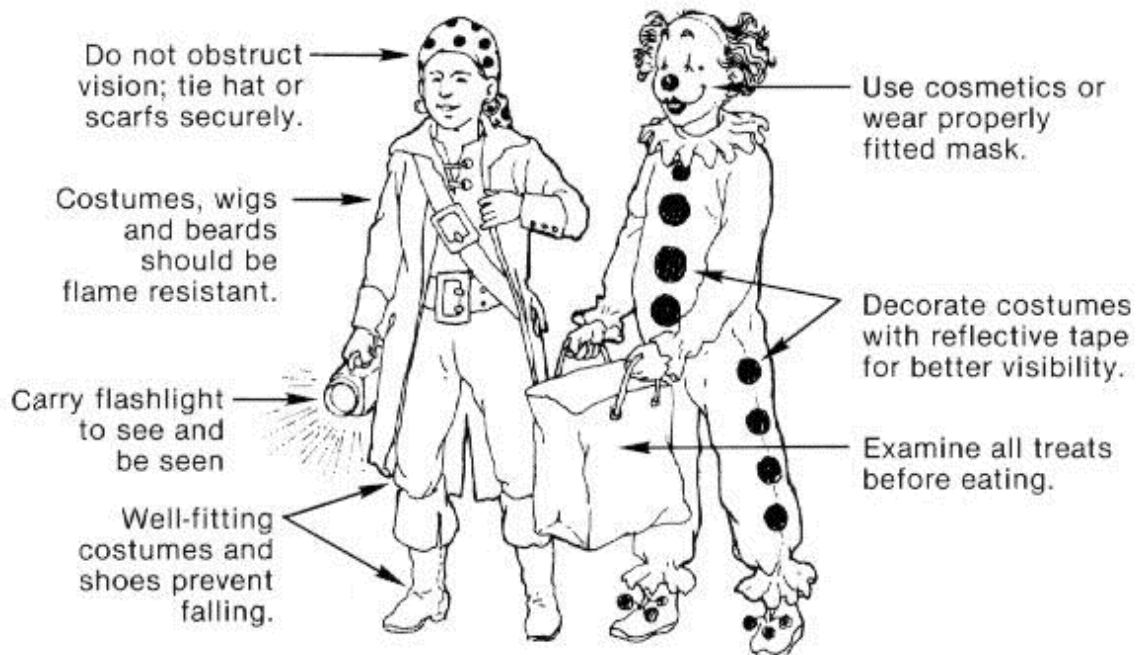
the Lantern” or “Jack-O-Lantern”. The turnip was replaced with a pumpkin when the legend was introduced into the American folklore in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Halloween Safety

Halloween safety encompasses costume design, motorist’s alertness, parents’ and homeowners’ responsibilities, pedestrian safety, and inspection of treats. These are all important, and the following safety tips should be followed:

### Costume Design:

- Costumes should be light and bright enough to be clearly visible by motorists
- Use fire-retardant materials for costumes
- Decorate or trim costumes with reflective tape that will glow in car’s headlights
- Bags or sacks should also be light colored or decorated with reflective tape
- Costumes should be short enough to prevent children from tripping or falling
- Children should wear well-fitting, sturdy shoes; do not wear high heeled shoes



- Hats and scarves should be tied securely to prevent them from slipping over the eyes
- Apply a natural mask of cosmetics rather than have the child wear a loose-fitting mask that might restrict breathing or obscure vision
- Swords, knives, and similar costume accessories should be of soft and flexible material
- Costumes should be loose enough such that warm clothing can be worn underneath, in case of cold weather

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## Motorists:

- Watch for children darting out from between parked cars
- Watch for children walking on roadways, medians, and curbs
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys carefully
- At twilight and later in the evening, watch for children in dark clothing



## Parents' Responsibilities:

- A good meal prior to “trick-or-treating” will discourage youngsters from filling up on Halloween treats
- Give flashlight with fresh batteries to children
- Plan ahead to use only battery powered lanterns or chemical light-sticks in place of candles in decorations and costumes
- Make sure that children know their home phone numbers and how to call 9-1-1
- Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behavior with children at Halloween time
- Make sure that an adult or an older responsible youth will be supervising the outing for children under the age of 12
- Plan and discuss the route the “trick-or-treaters” intend to follow. Know the names of older children who accompany the youngsters
- Instruct the children to travel only in familiar areas and along an established route
- Instruct your children to stop only at houses or apartment buildings that are well-lit, and never to enter a stranger’s home
- Establish a return time, and make sure that at least one of the children has a watch
- Tell your youngsters not to eat any treats until they return home

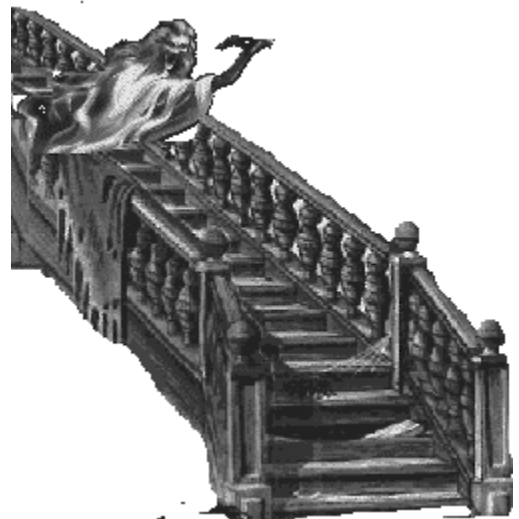




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## Home Owners' Responsibilities:

- Make sure that their yard is clear of things that can trip youngsters, such as ladders, hoses, dog leashes, flower pots, etc.
- Pets get frightened on Halloween. Lock them in a safe place to protect them from cars or inadvertently biting a "trick-or-treater"
- Battery powered Jack-O-Lantern candles are preferred over real flame. If you do use candles, place the pumpkin well away from where the "trick-or-treaters" will be walking or standing
- Make sure that paper or cloth yard decorations won't be blown into a flaming candle
- Healthy food alternatives to candy include packages of low-fat crackers with cheese or peanut butter filling, single-serve boxes of cereal, packaged fruit rolls, mini-boxes of raisins and single-serve packets of low-fat popcorn that can be microwaved later
- Non-food treats include plastic rings, pencils, stickers, erasers and coins



## Pedestrian Safety (On the Way to "Trick-or-Treating):

- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children on their neighborhood rounds
- Use a flashlight (make sure that the flashlight has new batteries)
- Stay in a group
- Walk slowly and communicate with each other where you are going
- Only "trick-or-treat" in well known neighborhoods and at homes that have a porch light on
- Remain on well-lit streets and always use the sidewalk
- If no sidewalk is available, walk at the farthest edge of the roadway facing traffic
- Never cut across yards or use alleys
- Never enter a stranger's home or car for a treat
- Obey all traffic and pedestrian regulations
- Always walk. Never run across a street

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- Remove any mask or item that may limit your eyesight before crossing a street. Only cross the street as a group at established crosswalks
- Stay away from pets or animals (dogs, cats, etc.) that you do not know
- Do not eat any treats until you get home and an adult thoroughly inspects them
- Law Enforcement authorities should be notified immediately of any suspicious or unlawful activity



## After “Trick-or-Treating”:

- Adults should inspect all treats thoroughly before children are allowed to eat them
- Wash fruits and slice them into small pieces before eating
- Throw away any treats that have been unwrapped or tampered with
- Make sure that items that can cause choking (such as hard candy) are given only to children of the appropriate age
- For any treats: When in doubt, throw it out!
- Try to apportion treats for the days following Halloween

*Have a Safe and Happy*



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## GET MORE INFORMATION

### References:

1. <http://www.lafd.org>
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3. <http://www.nsc.org>
4. <http://www.lapdonline.org>
5. <http://www.cpsc.gov>
6. <http://www.redcross.org>
7. <http://www.sosnet.com>

